



Identifying our Hidden Biases

Diversity refers to differences in race, ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, age, physical health and other differences in backgrounds or lifestyles. The challenge at work and in our daily lives is to see others as individuals and to not judge them based on appearances or other aspects of their lives. Recognizing and accepting our differences can lead to more understanding and a better, more productive environment for everyone.

Discrimination based on appearance or other factors can be both blatant and subtle. A hidden form of bias occurs when people unintentionally stereotype. The best way to combat this is to be more aware of how we communicate, act and react toward others.

- Be aware of and avoid words, images and situations that suggest people of one type of group are all the same or even hold the same opinions. These kinds of words and gestures cause harm, even if they are unintended.
- Use race, ethnic origin or other identity only when relevant. In most cases, it is not necessary.
- Avoid clichés, qualifiers and connotations that reinforce stereotypes. They are often interpreted as ignorant, superior or offensive.
- Realize that patronizing remarks and tokenism aimed at specific groups can be offensive not only to those about whom the remarks are being made, but to others as well.

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